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SUBJECT: TURKISH MEDIA REACTION
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2010

Media Highlights

US Embassy Ankara - Turkey Media Reaction - February 1, 2010 as prepared by the Public Affairs Information Office

How the US is Playing

"US Encircles Iran with Weapons" (Yeni Safak)
All media outlets carry in detail a Washington Post story which says the Obama Administration was quietly working with Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states to speed up arms sales and upgrade defenses for oil terminals and other key infrastructure in a bid to thwart military attacks by Iran. "The US Arms the Gulf," reads a headline in mainstream Hurriyet; "Intimidation Aimed at Iran," reports all-news broadcaster NTV; "The US Speeds up Arms Sales to Gulf against Iran Threat," says a headline in Islamist-oriented Zaman. Zaman also points out that according to the story, regional countries, including Yemen, UAE, Kuwait, Jordan and Turkey, were all seeking nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but that "if Iran were to test a weapon, those countries might reassess their options."

In "Remorseless Kidnap of Quake-Stricken Orphans," conservative-nationalist Bugun expresses concern over the growing fear of human trafficking in Haiti reporting the story of "ten American Baptists arrested for kidnapping 33 children from the earthquake-hit country." There is broad media coverage of the child trafficking arrests of the 10 Americans "after they tried to cross the border with more than 30 children who did not have proper paperwork." Islamist oriented Yeni Safak carries the headline, "Americans Kidnapped Those Kids," and says they were arrested for kidnapping children "who were being searched for, for days." Mainstream Sabah calls it "Ten Americans Were Going to Kidnap 31 Haitian Orphans," while leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet headline says, "Ten Child Trafficker Americans Arrested in Haiti." Mainstream Milliyet says, "Haiti's Social Affairs Minister Yves Christallin called the operation an abduction, not adoption."

"Mysterious American Vehicle in Poyrazkoy" (Vatan)
Mainstream Vatan claimed Sunday that a car belonging to the US Consulate in Istanbul was used to take pictures of a military zone in Poyrazkoy on April 7, 2009, 17 days before security forces

unearthed weapons, allegedly buried by the illegal 'Ergenekon' group, in the area. According to mainstream Aksam columnist Mustafa Mutlu, the US vehicle entered the military zone and took photos "by mistake" but he still opines that foreign powers had a role in the allegations about a military coup in Turkey. Aksam did report Sunday that the US Embassy has voiced strong reactions to the reports claiming US involvement in the weapons unearthed in Poyrazkoy, calling the charges "absurd."

"Jewish Security Teams" Claims (Sabah)

Sunday papers report the Islamist-oriented Saadet Party (SP) leader Numan Kurtulmus said that the US Consulate in Istanbul was giving "general security training" to religious minority groups in Istanbul. Kurtulmus added that the US State Department's 2009 religious freedom report contained information about this training. Mainstream Sabah repeats the story on Monday, adding that a businessman, Dogan Kasadolu, confirmed what Kurtulmus reported, saying high-school graduate volunteers were used to guard Jewish organizations, foundations and institutions after being trained abroad.

In the Headlines

Erdogan on New Constitution, Israel, Armenia

All media outlets carry excerpts from Prime Minister Erdogan's Sunday meeting with reporters on state broadcaster TRT, in which the PM said his government was going to remove a controversial protocol on Security, Public Order and Assistance, known as the Emasya Protocol. The protocol, which authorizes the military to conduct operations and intelligence gathering in cities without the approval

ANKARA 00000155 002 OF 004

of the governor's office or police, was signed by the police and the military in 1997, and now the military General Staff (TGS) and the Interior Ministry are working to annul the protocol. Erdogan also vowed to change the constitution. "We want a constitution in EU standards, which must be a civilian constitution, and the ideal way for accomplishing this would be holding a referendum," said Erdogan. Liberal Radikal says Erdogan's remarks would be a turning point in the debate over a military tutelage regime in Turkey.

Erdogan said Israel should give some thought to what it would be like to lose a friend like Turkey. "The way they recently treated our ambassador has no place in international politics. We have done our best for Israel-Syria relations. But now we see Prime Minister Netanyahu saying, 'I do not trust Erdogan, but I trust Sarkozy.'" He also commented on the Israeli foreign ministry's recent accusation of causing tensions between Turkey and Israel by saying: "I am telling the truth, and I will keep telling the truth. When innocent civilians are ruthlessly killed, struck by phosphorus bombs, infrastructure is demolished in bombings and people are forced to live in an open-air prison, we cannot see this as compatible with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights."

On the Armenian Constitutional Court's interpretation of the recent Turkish-Armenian protocols, Erdogan said: "We appear to have gotten off to an unhealthy start. What are we negotiating about? What are we going to do? Armenia should once again take this into consideration because we fulfilled our protocol commitments." Erdogan also said both sides had road maps, and that the process would continue.

Critical Day in Cyprus (Radikal, Milliyet)

Hurriyet and other papers reported on Sunday the Greek Cypriots have accepted a package prepared by Turkey and the Turkish Cypriots that includes the right of visa-free entry, free travel, free settlement and the right for Turkish nationals to obtain property. In "72 Million Turks Will Enjoy EU Rights In Cyprus" Hurriyet reports Greek Cypriot leader Christofias said the "nod of Greece and the EU is needed for the package." Hurriyet sees the acceptance of the Turkish package as "big progress in Cyprus talks." Islamist-oriented Zaman reports UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Cyprus on Sunday to boost the "slow-moving talks." Liberal Radikal notes that with the participation of Ban Ki-Moon in Monday's meetings, the parties are expected to make the first concrete progress in the long lasting Cyprus talks. Zaman notes the

two Cypriot leaders have achieved only "marginal progress" in 17 months of negotiations and reports that PM Erdogan commented yesterday in a live broadcast that "In my opinion, Christofias is not able to move comfortably, and we have also entered a difficult period." Erdogan said he appreciated Talat's determination to continue negotiations without any interruption due to the election process.

In "Why Did UN Secretary General Come to Cyprus?" Ferai Tinc opines in mainstream Hurriyet: "Ban Ki-Moon is the third UN Secretary General, paying a visit to Cyprus. As it is alleged, the reason for his visit is not to give support to Turkey only, but to support the process, which has been going on between the two leaders for months.

It is obvious that this visit has a big role in reviving a nearly collapsed process. Even though, Moon doesn't offer a new approach for a solution, he will still show that he is there to revive the process and to explain that the talks will continue in February also. This visit reminds everyone of the UN's involvement in Cyprus and this the only platform which gives equal bases to Turkey and Turkish Cyprus. And again, bringing this platform to the agenda is very important at a period when the EU reports and European Justice Commission decisions, obstruct a fair solution."

Editorial Commentary on the New Arms Draft Law

Riza Turmen criticizes the draft for the new weapons law in "Under the Shadow of the Weapons" in mainstream Milliyet: "As a nation, we Turks love weapons and we have a habit of expressing our happiness

ANKARA 00000155 003 OF 004

and sorrow by firing weapons. In Turkey, most of the time, weapons are used by the civilians and by the officials, in unintended ways. It is an important human rights issue in Turkey if the police fire before the necessary conditions occur. Allowing the police force and the MIT to import military weapons has been discussed in the Parliament's Internal issues sub commission reviewing the 'Arms Law' draft. With this law, police and the MIT will be able to import and use weapons which should only be used for military goals. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has a document which was agreed to by all member countries, including Turkey, which outlines a code for the military and civilian sides of security. This document and the code has a binding role. According to article 26 of this document, 'under the international guarantees, each OSCE state, will control its paramilitary forces so they do not exceed its founding intensions.' Police are accepted as a paramilitary force. Therefore, Turkey is responsible for the police force not to own weapons exceeding its founding intensions." Turmen concludes that "while a peace and democracy atmosphere is pursued in Turkey, it will not serve any purpose, for the police and the MIT to have heavy weapons and the civil public should be the main follower of this important issue."

'Alevism' Will be Taught in Religious Classes (Zaman)

All Sunday papers report that at the end of a three-day workshop with government officials held in Kizilcahamam near Ankara, Turkey's religious Alevi minority has asked the government to lift compulsory religious lessons or amend the content. They want to avoid going to court to get a child out of these mandatory classes. Mainstream Haberturk notes that the decisions adopted at the workshop were "revolutionary" and were important not only for the Alevis, but also for representatives of other religious groups. Mainstream Milliyet says religious instruction will remain compulsory, but students will be free to decide whether to receive instruction about religious practices.

Afghanistan Wants Turkish Imam-Hatip High Schools (Hurriyet online)
Mainstream Hurriyet online reports the Afghanistan government wants Turkey to build religious vocational high schools (Imam-Hatip) in the country, with Education Minister Faruk Wardak saying they wanted a "modernization" of Islamic education. Wardak highlighted the importance of fighting illiteracy, of women's education, and the need for technical schools, and added Afghanistan could make use of Turkey's experience in this regard.

TV Spotlight (CNN Turk)

People will gather in Istanbul to honor Abdi Ipekci, the late chief

editor of daily Milliyet, who was assassinated in 1979, on the 31st anniversary of his death. Ipekci was murdered by Mehmet Ali Agca who has recently been released after 30 years.

NATO defense ministers will meet in Istanbul on February 4-5.

President Gul will visit India and Bangladesh from February 7-13.

Russian President Medvedev will pay an official visit to Turkey in May as the guest of President Gul.

On Monday, UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon will come together with the Greek and Turkish Cyprus leaders in the divided island to boost peace talks.

The ruling AK Party is working to remove the restrictions on political propaganda in Kurdish during elections.

The seventh Alevi workshop has ended Sunday; the government and Alevi participants reached compromise on several issues.

Parliament Speaker Mehmet Ali Sahin said the "constitutional reforms package" might contain a provision for curbing the 10 percent election threshold.

ANKARA 00000155 004 OF 004

Ankara Chamber of Commerce (ATO) says Turkey needs more than one nuclear plant to meet its energy needs.

At a news conference in Kabul, President Karzai has renewed calls for the Taliban to lay down their arms and recognize the laws of Afghanistan.

JEFFREY